

Comparsion of kincaid and walker essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Everyone is raised within a culture with a set of customs and morals handed down by those generations before them. Most individual's view and experience identity in different ways. During history, different ethnic groups have struggled with finding their place within society. In the mid-nineteen hundreds, African Americans faced a great deal of political and social discrimination based on the tone of their skin. After the Civil Rights Movement, many African Americans no longer wanted to be identified by their African American lifestyle, so they began to practice African culture by taking on African hairdos, African-influenced clothing, and adopting African names.

By turning away from their roots, many African Americans embraced a culture that was not inherited, thus putting behind the unique and significant characteristics of their own inherited culture. Therefore, in an African American society, a search for self identity is a pervasive theme. The search for identity in "Everyday Use" written by Alice Walker uses the family's contrasting views to illustrate the importance of understanding present life in relation to the traditions of ancestral culture. Using careful descriptions and attitudes, Walker uses the voice of the protagonist (the mother) to demonstrate which factors contribute to the values of one's heritage and identity; she illustrates that these are represented not by the possession of objects or mere appearances, but by one's lifestyle and attitude. Also, in the illustration "Girl", Jamaica Kincaid uses a mother's voice, like Walker, to illustrate the mother's meaning of identity.

Both mothers in each story have their own outlook of what defines a person's identity. Although each mother has different interpretations of the

meaning of identity, they become the strong, dominant, and essential roles in their families, which justify their own identities. The examination of black women's need to keep their powerful heritage and identity is important to the protagonist in "Everyday Use." Walker uses the mother's voice to show the trials and tribulations of a small African American family located in the South. She speaks on multiple levels, voicing the necessity and strength of being true to one's roots and past; that heritage is not just something to talk about, but to live and enjoy in order for someone to fully understand themselves.

Unlike Kincaid, Walker gives her black female character's an identity of their own, each in their own right, and observes the internal conflicts of each mother and daughters struggle with identity. The mother represents a simple content way of life where identity and heritage are valued for both its usefulness, as well as its personal significance. In order to illustrate how the mother viewed identity versus her daughters, Walker quickly acknowledges that the mother has inherited many customs and traditions from her ancestors. She describes herself as a large big-boned woman with rough man-working hands (485). She also describes here various abilities including, killing and cleaning a hog as mercilessly as a man.

Being able to work hard and not care about being such a lady, is how the mother defines identity at this point. On the other hand, the two daughters each have opposing views on the value and worth of the different items in their lives. While Dee is the daughter who is materialistic and complex, believes modern way of life is where identity and heritage are to be valued only for their trendy-ness and aesthetic appeal. Oppositely, Maggie is the

<https://assignbuster.com/comparsion-of-kincaid-and-walker-essay/>

daughter who still lives at home and understands the family heritage (quilting), which enables her to find her identity as her mother had done.

Walker uses these conflicts to make the point that the significance of identity is more important than style, and in the end the mother can no longer base her decisions upon the appearance and personalities of her daughters.

Unlike Walker, Kincaid only uses the mother's perspective of what the meaning of identity is. Although the daughter is being spoken to, Kincaid never gives the daughter's point of view about the things her mother's saying to her. Using a monologue style of writing, Kincaid uses the mother's beliefs of identity in order to help shape her daughter's perspective of what she thinks identity might mean. Kincaid uses the mother's speech as a representation of the daughter's struggle to find her own emerging identity in the shadow of her mother and the shadow of the identity her mother wants her to take on. In remembering all of the things her mother tried to advise her of, the mother gives her interpretation of a woman's identity.

The mother recommends such things as, " don't squat down to play marbles- you are not a boy you know", " don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all", and, " on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming. " The mother is only trying to teach her daughter to carry herself in such a manner that is lady-like. In the end of the story, the mother suggests that he daughter, " always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh". The daughter then replied, " but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread? " Her mother was in complete dismay by her daughter's response, " you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread? " At the

sound of her daughter admitting to the type of identity she had already inquired, the mother was freighted and felt defeated at the fact that she was not able to teach her daughter from right from wrong. While the mother in “Everyday Use” never verbally explained to her daughters what the meaning of identity was, she tried to lead by example and show them what it really means to know who you are and where you come from. On the other hand, in “Girl” the mother voiced her thoughts of identity in hoping to persuade her daughter to not take on her actions, but like the daughter in “Everyday Use”, (Dee), this daughter tried to establish her own identity without the help of her mother.

Although both mothers interpreted identity in different manners, they both wanted the best for their daughters, as do every mother. Alice Walker and Jamaica Kincaid’s both use a woman’s voice in order to describe their meanings of identities, symbolizes how all mothers are when their daughters are growing up. Reading Walker’s and Kincaid’s short stories, allows the audience to see why both authors used a mother’s voice and a mother-daughter relationship to descriptively describe a woman’s search for identity because through a mother, a daughter learns what it means to becoming a woman. There is no better teacher than her mother. Although not all mother’s, like Dee and Maggie’s mother, have the opportunity to voice their method of finding their identity, like the mother in “Girl”, most mothers hope their daughters find their true self-identity before the world around them defines it for them. Walker uses the mother, whose identity development comes easy to her because she stayed true their heritage, to show how identity development of adolescents (her daughters) becomes a

complex task, but it's through experiences, as there mother's had, is what will guide them into finding their identity.

For example, the mother in “ Everyday Use” changes a great deal through her experiences. To the reader she may lack self-confidence, (give examples), but in actuality, the mother is defined her responsible way in which is has dealt with the generational hand-down of her ancestors quilts. Walker and Kincaid take note in that clearly identifies that there are outside social forces that shape the identity of a person, and actually can cause a change in someone that might never have occurred if they were not afflicted by these forces. The desire to fit in and represent your particular culture, means either ignoring the forces of family heritage (Dee) or adopting the habits and ways of life of those surrounding forces (Mother, Maggie), that will later define identity.

Rather given a speech or shown through actions of a mother, each daughter used their inner interpretations in order to grow to learn their identity and individuality of the person standing next to them. Similarly each of the authors sees an importance in learning one's own identity. Although some may feel it is the parent's job to help their children find their identity, no parent is able to walk their child down the right path; it is that child's choice on which road. It is with the forces of family, friends, media, and school that influence a child's identity. In the words of Amiri Baraka “ It is in knowing your history and where you come from, is what determines who you are” meaning your heritage is a reflection of your identity. In Alice Walker's stories, she illustrates the importance of knowing your heritage through the character of the mother.

Kincaid also gave way to the daughter knowing her heritage, by her mother giving her life challenges that she dealt with at her age, thereby guiding her daughter into not making the same mistakes as she had. Both works of literature helps readers understand that a person's state of mind is full of thoughts about who they are and what they want to be. People can try to modify their identity as much as they want, but that can never change.